

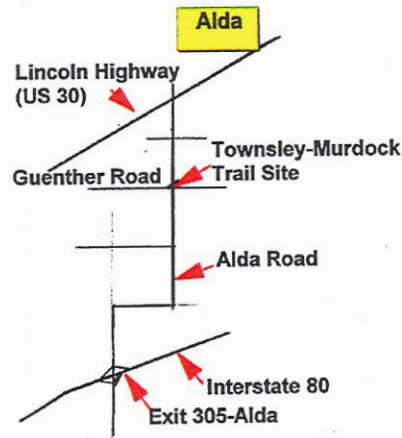
Proposed text for tabletop marker at the Townsley-Murdock Site by the Nebraska Mormon Trail Association.

*"The Mormon Pioneer Co. crossed the Wood River about a mile east of here on April 29, 1847. The trail led up the slope to this tableland between the Platte and the Wood River valleys. The higher tableland above the river valley made a much better road surface for the pioneers and hundreds of later wagon trains making their journey west to Utah, California and Oregon.*

*The swales, or depressions, in the ground from decades of wagons, plodding livestock and pioneers on foot one and a half centuries ago have survived here because the small patch of ground between the modern road and the river was preserved as pastureland for generations.*

*The early Mormon Pioneers found abundant wildlife and enjoyed fresh game to eat as they passed through this area. The fragrant smell of blooming fruit trees and cottonwoods probably reminded them of their former home along the Mississippi River Valley."*

The valley has continued to be a major transcontinental transportation route for America. To the north (just over 1 mile) is the first transcontinental railroad (Union Pacific in 1866) and the first transcontinental paved highway (Lincoln Highway 1915). To the south (about 2 miles) is Interstate 80 one of the major transcontinental highways of the 20th and 21st century.



Bibliography:

- <sup>1</sup> Kimball, Stanley B., Ph.D., author Historic Resource Study Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail
- <sup>2</sup> National Register of Historic Places Registration
- <sup>3</sup> Clayton, William, author Latter-Day Saints Emigrant's Guide pub. 1848
- <sup>4</sup> 1860 Census
- <sup>5</sup> Hall Co. Register of Deeds
- <sup>6</sup> Lass, William E., author From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake An Account of Overland Freighting Nebraska Mormon Trail Assn.



Hall County Historical Society

## Townsley-Murdock Immigrant Trail Site



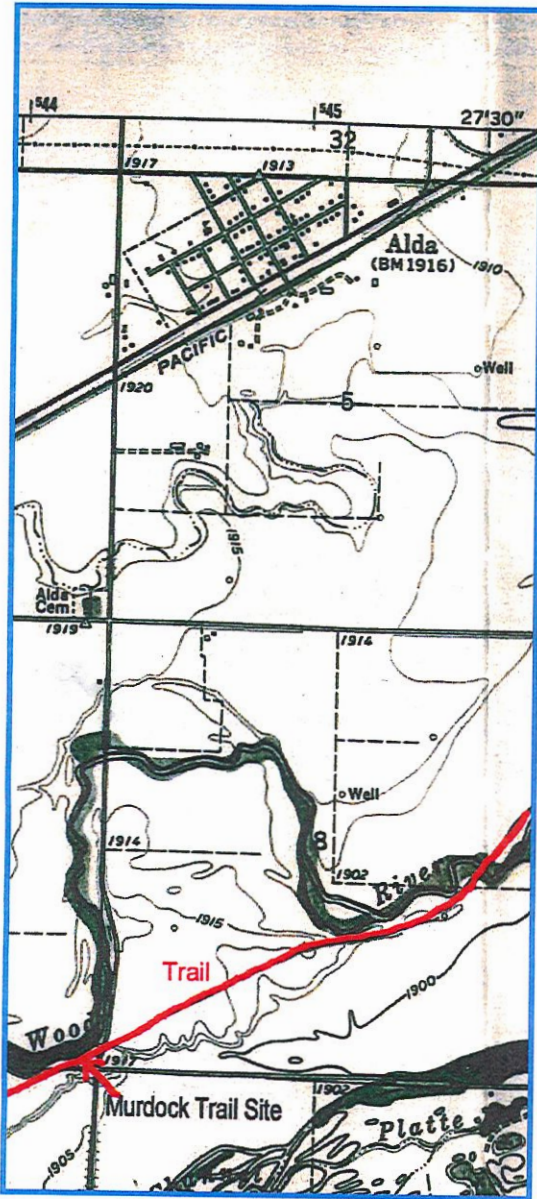
Mormon Cart on Trail at Townsley-Murdock Site

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Townsley-Murdock Trail Site  
U. S. Dept. of Interior  
Geological Survey Map

Although this trail was not blazed by the Mormons it has been known as the Council Bluffs Road, the Omaha Road, the Great Platte River Road, the Omaha-Fort Kearny Military Road, and the North Branch of the Oregon Trail, it is best and almost universally known today as "the Mormon Trail" <sup>1</sup>

This trail located on the North side of the Platte starting in the early 1840's became known as the Mormon Trail and is the route many Mormons used in 1847. It was used by various immigrant groups including Mormons, non-Mormons, the military, overland freighters and local traffic. It was the Colorado Gold Rush of 1850-1860....together with increasing military on the Plains and the demands for transcontinental services that transformed the Platte Valley from a wilderness....to a thin line of settlement, with facilities for immigrants and freighters. On the 1866 Government Land Office map this section of the trail is listed as the Omaha and Fort Kearny Road. <sup>2</sup>

The Pioneer Company of Mormons led by Brigham Young crossed this trail site about midmorning on Thursday April 29, 1847. After crossing the Wood River one mile east of this site William Clayton's Journal states "We then traveled on a table or prairie gently ascending for four or five miles but very even and good traveling." <sup>3</sup>

An 1866 Survey notes this tract of land contained the Murdock home, a saw mill and a telegraph line. <sup>5</sup>

This site was originally settled by Marshal Townsley about 1860. <sup>4</sup>The property was later occupied by Phineas and Catherine Murdock in 1866. <sup>5</sup>

An 1866 Survey notes this tract of land contained the Murdock home, a saw mill and a telegraph line. <sup>5</sup>

With the building of the first transcontinental railroad by the Union Pacific Railroad in the 1860's, the sawmill was just one mile south of the new tracks and probably supplied railroad ties to the project.

It is believed that this site was used by Pawnee Indians as early as the 1600's as a hunting camp. <sup>2</sup>



Original Trail Ruts on Mormon Trail 1-1/2 miles South of Alda, NE known as the Townsley-Murdock Trail Site

Historical trail ruts are unique and important cultural features embodying the spirit of westward expansion and the settlement of the nation during the early and mid-19th century. The preserved segment of trail at the Murdock site has statewide significance as a physical representation of the Platte River immigrant trail that retains a high degree of integrity. <sup>2</sup>

The resources of this site have never been plowed and possesses a high degree of integrity. There is no evidence for a late 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century occupation of this site. <sup>2</sup>

Edward Creighton, Western Union agent, was responsible for construction of the transcontinental telegraph line in 1860-1861 from the Missouri River westward through the Townsley-Murdock Site property to Salt Lake City where it was joined to the line from the west coast on Oct. 24, 1861. After the Union Pacific was built in 1866 the telegraph line was moved to follow the Union Pacific Railroad. <sup>6</sup>

The Townsley-Murdock site was acquired by the Hall County Historical Society in October of 1995 and it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 5, 1998. <sup>2</sup>